

# Remote Hearings



Because of COVID-19 many courtrooms are closed or changing the way they operate. Many court hearings are now *remote*. That means some or all of the people participate by video or by phone. Read below to know how to prepare for a remote hearing.

## How do I know if I have a remote hearing?



The court will notify you if your hearing is remote. They may contact you by U.S. mail, email, or phone. They will also notify the other parties in your case.

## What if I don't have Internet or a phone?

Contact the court as soon as possible. They may:

- Postpone the hearing until everyone can participate safely, or
- Help you find a way to participate, such as free hot spots, or access to a free phone or Internet.

## What if I cannot join at the scheduled hearing time?

You must have a good reason why you cannot be present at the scheduled time. And you must tell the court *before* the hearing. Go to your court's website. It will explain how to contact the court.

## Will the court tell me how to join the remote hearing?

Yes. The court will send you instructions on how to join your remote hearing by video or by phone. Courts may use different apps and processes. Visit your court's website or call your court to find out how your court does remote hearings.

## How to Get Ready for Your Remote Hearing



Make sure you have good Internet connection.



Download the app your court uses. Examples of an app your court may use are Zoom, Webex, or GoToMeeting. Practice with the app so you feel comfortable.



Charge your computer or mobile device. If you are calling in by phone, make sure you have enough minutes.



Use earbuds or headphones, if you can. This frees up your hands, and improves sound quality.



Ask the court how you should get them any evidence, like documents or photos.



Tell the court if you have witnesses. The court will tell them how to join the hearing.

## Get Your Space Ready!



- Find a quiet place where no one will interrupt you.
- Have all your papers ready, including a list of what you want to say to the judge.
- Know what time your hearing starts and how to log on or what number to call.



## Look Good!

- Set the camera at your eye level. If using your phone, prop it up so you can look at it without holding it.
- Look at the camera, not the screen, when you speak.
- Dress neatly. Wear soft solid colors.
- Sit in a well-lit room, not too dark, not too bright. No bright lights behind you.



## Sound Good!

- Pause before speaking in case there is any audio/video lag.
- Mute yourself when not speaking to improve sound quality.
- Say your name each time you speak.
- Talk slowly and do not interrupt.

## What should I expect during the hearing?

- 1 When you first join, the judge will take you from a "waiting room" to the "hearing room." Only the people in your case will be in your hearing room.
- 2 The judge will make sure you can hear and talk, and go over all the rules.
- 3 You will see a picture or name of each person in your hearing on your screen. The first one you see is the person who is speaking.
- 4 Your hearing is live and will be recorded. Everyone there can hear what you say. It may even be open to the public.
- 5 The judge decides most cases at the end of the hearing.

**!** *Important!* You may be connecting from home, but it is still a court hearing. Pay attention, and follow all rules.

**Need help connecting to free or reduced cost legal help in your area?**







[www.indianalegalhelp.org/find-legal-help/](http://www.indianalegalhelp.org/find-legal-help/)



# Marion County Courts - Attending a WebEx Hearing/Meeting

Please be advised that all Hearings and Meetings conducted by the Marion County Courts, Indiana are recorded and are the official court proceedings. All parties and participants are required to follow the following protocols.

- 1) **MUTE** your microphones when you are not speaking. **As a participant:** In the **Participants** panel, select **Mute**  or **Unmute**  to mute or unmute your own microphone
- 2) **VIDEO** If you are just watching the court proceeding and it is not your case, you can continue to watch the proceedings but there is no need for you to share your video -
  - a) To **stop your video** during the event, select **Switch camera device or stop my video** , and then select **Stop My Video**.
  - b) To **start your video** during the event, select **Start my video** , and then select **Start My Video**.

Here are some additional requirements for participants appearing on video remotely -

- 1) Adjust your camera to ensure your whole face can be seen by the Defendant, attorneys and case participants.
  - a) Watch for any bright lights in your background, they can wash out or distort your face
- 2) This is an official Court proceeding, so dress appropriately.
- 3) Be aware of what you have in the background – do you want folks to see your family? Any descriptive objects/surroundings (i.e. could someone tell where you live)? Anything in the background that might lead to a perception of partiality?
- 4) If you take a break (which is completely fine), turn your mic and camera off
- 5) Please make sure that there are no other people in the background e.g. pets, family members

## Getting Ready - Preparing for the meeting

### 1. Receive meeting information

Prior to the meeting, all attendees should receive an email containing the meeting information. It will include the date/time of the meeting, the meeting number, a meeting password (meeting passwords are now required for all meetings), a link to the

meeting and the audio conference access code (if you opt to use a phone to listen to the hearing/meeting – mute your phone).

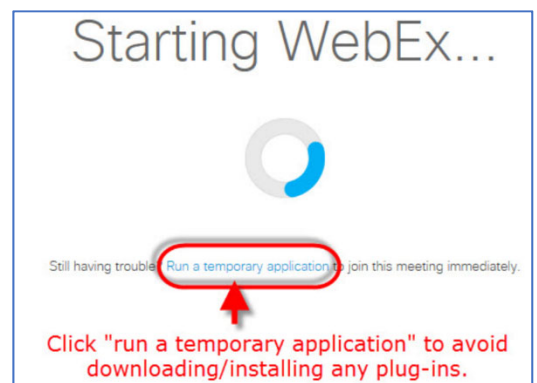
## 2. Verify WebEx browser plug-in or download mobile app

Prior to the scheduled meeting, test your browser by joining this test meeting: <http://www.webex.com/test-meeting.html>. Be sure to use the same workstation and browser you are planning to use for the actual meeting.

You may be prompted to download/install the Meeting Center plug-in that is used to attend the meeting if it is not already installed. If you are using a work computer, you may not have the administrative privileges to install the plug-in and will have to contact your local IT to have the WebEx meeting center plug-in installed. If you have difficulty joining a meeting with one browser, try using a different browser as often one will work better than another depending on local browser settings (i.e. Firefox, IE, Chrome).

If you do not have time or the correct privileges to download and install the Meeting Center plug-in, you should always see a link on the WebEx set-up screen that says 'Run a temporary application' to join this meeting immediately. If you click that link the WebEx Meeting window will display without the plug-in being installed. See a [screenshot of how this link might appear while you are trying to join the meeting](#).

If you need to participate in a WebEx conference from a mobile device (iPad, smartphone, etc.) [download WebEx's mobile app](#).



## 3. Verify audio setup

You will want to verify your audio setup prior to the meeting as this is not tested as part of the test meeting. We strongly recommend using a headset with microphone, or alternatively a laptop's built-in microphone plus speakers works well. Only after joining the real meeting will you be prompted to setup the audio portion of the meeting and given the opportunity to test your computer's audio setup (microphone and speakers). **NOTE:** Alternatively, you can use the call-in toll number provided in the meeting information, however **remember that toll charges will apply.**

# Joining the Meeting

## 1. Locate the meeting link

You will need access to the meeting link that was sent via email, an Outlook invitation is how the meeting link and information is sent out. Meetings are no longer listed on a public calendar and therefore no longer browsable due to security concerns. However, attendees that also have a host account (not all attendees do), you can see a calendar

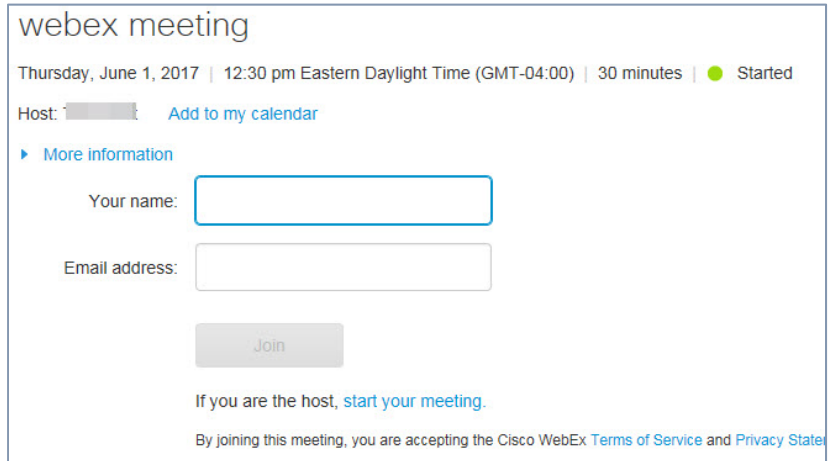
listing of meetings you have been invited to by logging into the WebEx site for your institution and clicking **My WebEx**. **If the meeting is in someone's Personal Room in WebEx, however, the meeting may not be listed.**

## 2. Join the meeting

**If the host has not yet started the meeting**, you may not be able to enter the meeting.

Whether or not attendees can join before the host is dependent upon the settings applied to that particular meeting.

If you are joining from a meeting link, simply click the link and enter your name and email



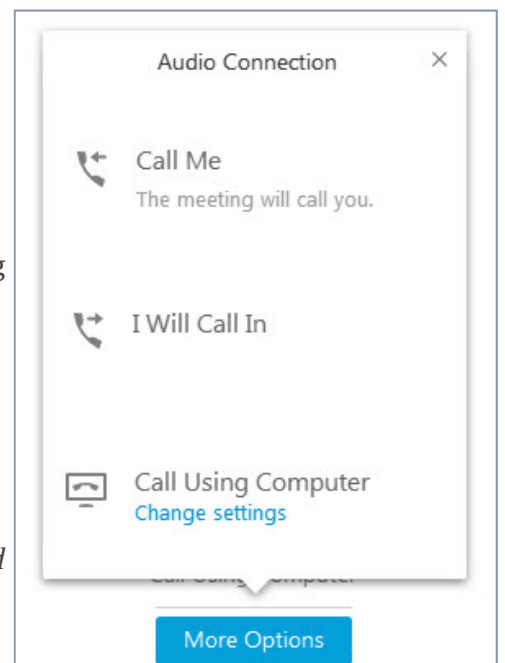
address, then click **Join** to join the meeting. If you are joining by entering a meeting number into the WebEx website for your institution (as above) on the *Meeting Center - Attend a Meeting* page, you will first need to enter the meeting number, then the meeting password. Then you can enter your name and email address and click **Join** to join the meeting.

Assuming you pre-tested your browser plug-in (as suggested in **Getting Ready - Preparing for the meeting** section above), the Meeting Center window will launch. This is where your online meeting will take place.

## 3. Make Audio Selection

Next, you will be prompted to make your selection about how you will participate in the audio portion of the meeting. You can choose the "Call Using Computer" option (assuming you have a headset, or can use the computer's microphone and speakers). Prior to clicking the "Call Using Computer" button, you can test the speakers and microphone by clicking "Test speaker/microphone" found under the Call Using Computer button.

Alternatively, you can select the "Call Me" option and provide a phone number for WebEx to call you, or you can call in using your own phone. *We highly recommend using the "Call Using Computer" or "Call Me" options, as there are toll charges that apply if you call in using a*



*phone.*

**NOTE: If you are participating in the conference audio by phone, NEVER put the WebEx call on "Hold"-** if your organization has background "on-hold" music, everyone on the call will hear it. The host will probably mute you and neither of you will necessarily know that when you return to the call.

#### **4. You are all set!**

# Remote Hearings via Zoom:

## FAQs for the Public

How should I prepare for my remote hearing?

Review these [tips for attending remote court hearings](#) before the day of your hearing. It may be helpful to test your internet connection and Zoom prior to your hearing if possible.

Do I need a Zoom license to participate in a remote court hearing?

No. You will be able to participate in a remote hearing via Zoom without your own Zoom account. The court that is conducting the hearing will have a licensed Zoom account. The court will send all participants a Zoom link and meeting PIN. If you do not have this information, you can review your case on [mycase.in.gov](#) or [contact the court](#).

Do I need access to a computer with a webcam to attend a remote hearing?

No. You can join the Zoom meeting via computer audio if your computer does not have a webcam. Also, the camera on smart phones and tablets can be used to join Zoom meetings.

If you only have access to a telephone, participants can call into the Zoom meeting with a telephone by dialing the toll-free number given by the court and then entering the meeting ID, followed by #, when prompted.

Why am I placed in a virtual waiting room?

Zoom allows the judge or court staff hosting the meeting to place hearing participants in a virtual waiting room until the actual court hearing commences. Remember that this virtual hearing is a court proceeding; you should wait for it to start in the waiting room without leaving your computer or tend to another task. When the judge is ready to begin the hearing, the host will move the appropriate participants out of the waiting room and into the virtual hearing room. This can happen very quickly.

Who will be attending the virtual hearing?

You may see several attendees during a virtual hearing. You will see the judge, the other litigant or litigants and any attorneys representing a party in your case. You may see one or more court staff members that are assisting with running the hearing. You may see a probation officer if you're in a criminal hearing

A few courts allow the public or media into the virtual hearing along with the participants. In all scenarios it is important to listen to the judge and your attorney if you have one. The judge's instructions should be followed throughout the hearing.

Will I be able to speak to my attorney privately during the hearing if the court allows?

Yes. If it becomes necessary to speak to your attorney confidentially during a hearing and the judge allows it, the meeting host will place you and your attorney in a Zoom “break out” room. While in this room, the conversation between you and your attorney is private.

Should I use the chat feature in Zoom?

No. Please do not use the chat feature during the virtual hearing. All communications with the judge and other litigants should be done verbally and on the record when the judge asks the parties to speak or answer questions. When speaking during the virtual hearing, speak clearly and, if using one, look at the computer’s webcam instead of the screen. You may want to speak slightly more slowly than usual to ensure all participants hear and understand you even if there is a lag.

Can I record the hearing?

No. Restrictions in the Indiana Judicial Code of Conduct prohibit the recording of court hearings. The judge may mention this as the hearing starts.

Can the public watch my hearing?

Yes. Virtual hearings are streamed to a public streaming platform during the hearing. They will not be available after the hearing ends or for download. Most courts are streaming these to the [Trial Court Remote Video Hearings website](#) or YouTube.

What makes the Zoom meeting secure?

Most courts are using “enterprise” Zoom licenses which increases the level of security from a basic Zoom license. When virtual hearings are scheduled, the meeting link and PIN should be used only by hearing participants to join the meeting. These licenses also provide the waiting room feature that gives the judge and meeting hosts more control over who enters the remote hearing. The meeting host and co-hosts also have the ability to remove unwanted participants from the meeting if they join.